

Australian workers and youth denounce visit by Israeli President Herzog

Our reporters
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Yesterday, tens of thousands of workers and young people joined protests across Australia, opposing the visit by Israeli President Isaac Herzog and the ongoing complicity of the federal Labor government in the genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza. Herzog was invited by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese under the pretext of providing “support” to the Jewish community after the Bondi Beach terror attack.

In fact, the December mass shooting has been used by state and federal Labor governments as an excuse to impose harsh new laws restricting freedom of speech and criminalising protest, particularly targeting pro-Palestinian demonstrations. In Sydney, hundreds of police including riot squads were deployed to prevent demonstrators from marching, in line with anti-protest legislation rammed through parliament late last year by the New South Wales (NSW) Labor government of Premier Chris Minns.

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke with workers and young people at the protests in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne.

A **young worker** said he had come to the Sydney protest to oppose: “The actions of the government inviting a war criminal who has incited genocide and the fact that we want to continue relations with a state that is currently enacting genocide on another country.

“They’re invoking extra police forces and extra laws, because they know that what they’re doing is not good.”

He had been following the mass demonstrations in the US against anti-immigrant raids, deportations and state murder of protesters and said: “It’s terrible what’s going on in Minneapolis. It’s just straight-up fascism and abuse of the populace. People are scared of being shot and killed.”

The worker noted the parallel between the Trump administration’s brutal repression of dissent and the attack on the right to protest being spearheaded in

Australia by the NSW Labor government: “Here, they’re trying to disincentivise people from protesting with fines and move-on orders. It comes from the same machine of trying to repress the working class, to elevate the rich.”

Georgina, who works in community housing in the Central Coast region north of Sydney, told the WSWs:

“I think that the decision to invite Herzog here was the wrong decision. We shouldn’t be bringing in somebody who has actually signed bombs and is a war criminal basically. He made comments about there being ‘no civilians’ in Gaza, and he has certainly been really involved with the taking of land from Palestinians in the West Bank.”

She denounced the Albanese government for “still saying that they haven’t been doing anything that was supporting the war. Whether it’s parts for engines, for aircraft that have been bombing people in Gaza, or being complicit through silence, if you’re not standing up, you’re on the side of the oppressor.

“Even though I’m from the Central Coast and there were protests in Newcastle and Wyong, I thought it was really important to come to this one in Sydney around that whole law that’s been brought in by the Minns government to quash protests—peaceful protests.

“Even people who were involved with the terrible, terrible tragedy that happened in Bondi have said in interviews that they’re bad laws. Both our federal and state governments have made a terrible decision I think in rushing these laws through.”

Joan said Herzog had “incited genocide against the Palestinians, and it’s outrageous that the Australian government has invited him to come here. I think it’s obviously a bad decision, but I feel like it’s based on the belief that as a mid-sized country, we need to ally with the superpower, the US, and Israel.

“They’re conflating Judaism with the state of Israel and it is just wrong. It puts Jewish people across the world in

danger from conflating a religion with a genocidal political movement.”

Joan explained that she had to skirt police blockades to attend the protest: “I arrived initially at the north end, but it was blocked by police, and essentially I circled Town Hall until I found an entrance on the southwest side and then managed to get in. But I can see around me now, the police are still blocking a lot of protesters from entering.

“It seems blatantly illegal, but I’m also a mindful that the Minns government has won in court, I think about an hour ago, to grant police unprecedented rights, and I think it’s disgusting.”

Karl, a retired IT worker, told the WSWs: “I’m here today because I don’t agree with the Australian Labor government inviting a war criminal to this country. Even though I’ve been watching with growing concern Israel’s genocide against the Palestinian people, and have seen the rallies on the news, this is the first pro-Palestine protest that I’ve attended.

“For Albanese to invite Herzog here is completely wrong—it was a line in the sand for me—and I just had to come here and be part of the opposition. How can they do such a thing?

“I’m originally from Ireland and went back there in October 2025. There was a big march down O’Connell Street in Dublin while I was there, and I spoke to quite a few people who were all saying the same things about Israel that the people here are talking about. They were marching because they opposed the suffering and the killing of thousands of Palestinians—men, women, and innocent children. They were also protesting the wholesale theft of Palestinian land by settlers, which has been going on for decades and is in violation of all international norms and human rights.

“I’m angry that the Australian government invited Herzog, who is an accused war criminal, and I know that the majority in Ireland would be really shocked by this. The Irish people refuse to believe the media lies about Gaza. The population—who know quite a bit about colonial oppression—do not agree with what Israel is doing. They have some firsthand experience with these sorts of issues.”

Teresa, a retired teacher at the Melbourne rally, said: “The Labor government has been deaf to the word of the people about not having Herzog here. We don’t want him here. It’s appalling to invite someone with his involvement with the Zionist movement to come here to offer ‘grief support’ when his country is creating so much grief.

“There are so many people here—I think it’s fantastic. They’re all different ages and races, people have come out in full force with their banners and it’s exhilarating to see when you look around the world what’s happening. This is a really positive.

Asked about the attacks on free speech Teresa said, “Our liberties are being eroded and it’s not slow anymore. I think it’s quite disturbing and especially what’s happening in other parts of the world. In the United States what’s happened with ICE and how the United States president seems to be able to say whatever he likes but everyone else has to be super, super careful. It could very easily happen here and that’s really scary.

Daniella, a student at RMIT who works part time as a security guard, said, “I don’t think our country should support genocide and our leaders shouldn’t be inviting over genocidal freaks. I don’t want our country to have diplomacy with any country that is exterminating another people. I actually came today because of the new laws, the anti-protest laws. I haven’t been to a protest in a long while but now I’m hearing we can’t say this and that, okay now I’ll show up.

Michelle, a retired teacher, said, “I think it’s so important that we show our anger at the fact that Herzog’s been asked to come to Australia when we know about the terrible things that have been perpetrated upon the Gazan population. That our government would invite someone who has signed bombs that he knows are going to injure innocent civilians is really terrible.

“As a democracy none of us would have wanted this and if we’d had a chance to be asked our opinions my guess is that the vast majority of Australians would say we don’t want Herzog in Australia.

“Why were they so insistent on doing this sort of an action? Supposedly they’re arguing social cohesion, well, it’s exactly the opposite. It’s just going to fracture people more and it’s not what people need after that terrible tragedy. This is not what Australians want—to have someone who’s involved in such atrocities coming over here and being given the red carpet.”



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